

EASL transitioning into the new decade

Heiner Wedemeyer*

EASL Secretary General

Dear EASL Members, Dear Friends,

The EASL Governing Board would like to wish you a very successful New Year in 2010!

As EASL enters into the new decade you may have noticed that our society has stepped-up its level of professionalism at all levels. A year ago an office was established for EASL in Geneva, Switzerland, which was a major milestone for our society. In previous years, EASL was managed through a professional congress organizer (PCO); however, our current PCO-independent office is without any doubt the most important and most successful initiative that was undertaken by the previous Governing Board chaired by Jean-Michel Pawlotsky. As one of the world's leading associations in the field of liver disease this new development will clearly benefit all EASL members. The new EASL office is headed by Executive Director Grégoire Pavillon, who has successfully built a dynamic team that now runs all EASL administrative issues, providing essential support for the EASL Governing Board. EASL also has had the good fortune to inherit the expertise of Laetitia Bru, who formerly worked for the PCO but has now become EASL's Deputy Executive Director. Many of you know Laetitia well; she has been involved with EASL for many years and continues to provide EASL with her experience and extensive knowledge. I am also personally very thankful that she will remain responsible for all EASL-congress-related issues. When you call the EASL office in Geneva, you will be greeted on the phone by Emilie Keller, Chief Operations Officer. Emilie started with Grégoire and Laetitia in January 2009 and aside from various logistical responsibilities, Emilie has now taken charge of all EASL membership issues, a task that was formerly handled by the PCO. Emilie's great organizational skills will no doubt help to keep EASL running smoothly. Finally, the team was completed in May with the hiring of Jacqui Sisto, Communications Project Manager. Jacqui has done an excellent job during her first months and has successfully established a new, revamped EASL website, and I would definitely encourage you to visit its new and improved features. On behalf of the EASL Governing Board I would like to express our thanks to the EASL office team. We greatly appreciate your enthusiasm, loyalty and commitment to EASL.

EASL is also evolving on several other fronts: we are very happy to present to you in January 2010 a newly stylized and formatted Journal of Hepatology, which we hope you will like as much as we do. The most important change yet, which will take

place from 2010 onwards, is that the Journal of Hepatology will be headed by a new Editor-in-Chief, Professor Didier Samuel. The Governing Board would like to thank Professor Didier Samuel and his international team of Co-Editors, Christopher Day (UK) and Peter Galle (Germany) for taking on the challenge of becoming Editors for the Journal of Hepatology – an extremely important task for our society. The EASL Governing board looks forward to working with you over the next 5 years and we wish you success in further improving our Journal. The Editors are supported by the Journal Editorial Office which has been integrated with the EASL office in Geneva, Switzerland. Sonia Guimil, PhD, has been appointed as Editorial Manager and will receive support from Adam Swetloff, PhD, Editorial Assistant. With the centralization of EASL and the Journal of Hepatology Editorial Office in one location we will be able to maintain a high level of performance and professionalism over the next decade, independently of the changes to the Editorial team. Sonia and Adam are also very committed to EASL; they are full of ideas and have worked hard to successfully implement Professor Didier Samuel's new vision for the Journal.

One year ago, the former Governing Board chaired by Jean-Michel Pawlotsky invited three teams who had applied for the Editor's position. The Governing Board was impressed by the quality and ideas of all three applications. EASL can be proud that we were in such a position as to be able to choose from three outstanding applications. The selection process was very challenging and the Governing Board had lengthy discussions on the pros and cons of each proposal. However, after much deliberation we came to a unanimous decision. I would like to thank those involved with the Swiss team (Professors Clavien, Dufour, Heim, and Negro) as well as the "International" team (Professors Gerbes, Mutimer, and Pinzani) for their ideas, time, and continuous commitment to EASL. Your applications were extremely helpful and your ideas will certainly be considered in the future to further improve the performance of the Journal.

The EASL Governing Board also wishes to express many thanks to Massimo Colombo's Editorial team and his Co-Editors Roberto de Franchis and Mario Mondelli. The Milan Editorial Office was diligently managed by Ann Fox who together with the Editorial team increased the quality of the Journal over the past 5 years. The combined, outstanding efforts of the previous Journal team are reflected by a sharp increase in the Journal's Impact Factor from 4.8 in 2004 to 7.1 in 2008. Everybody in the field acknowledges the high scientific content of the Journal of Hepatology, which is now attracting an increasing number of submissions from countries all around the world, including North

* Tel.: +49 511 532 3306; fax: +49 511 532 4896.
E-mail address: wedemeyer.heiner@mh-hannover.de.



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America and Asia. Of course, success is always two-sided: a consequence of the rise in impact factor of our Journal is that it is now more difficult to get papers accepted. ... Thank you Massimo, Roberto, Mario and all the Associate Editors for your outstanding job which has been extremely important for EASL.

The newly appointed EASL Governing Board started working in May 2009. It has been quite challenging for us as the work-load of the Governing Board has enormously increased concurrent with the tremendous growth of EASL. At the first Governing Board meeting we were already faced with a difficult decision: we had to move the International Liver Congress 2010™ from Nice, France to Vienna, Austria. EASL membership grew so rapidly over the past year that the congress venue in Nice was simply too small for all occupants. We were extremely lucky to discover that the brand new Vienna Congress-Messe-Center right behind the Prater was available (you may not know that this congress venue is different from the Austria-Center where EASL had been in 2006). We are convinced that the International Liver Congress™ will become a big success as the new congress venue perfectly fulfils all requirements for our meeting: it is very close to the city (just 6–10 minutes by metro from major hotels), it has an abundance of meeting rooms and a perfect poster exhibition area ensuring a relaxed atmosphere for scientific exchange and discussion.

The Governing Board has decided to allocate work-load specific responsibilities among the different GB members, a way of functioning that proved to be very successful in recent months. Among the many decisions that were taken in all the different areas, I here only want to mention that the GB has decided that all young investigator bursary recipients will receive one year's free membership to EASL from 2010 onwards. We also want to motivate our fellows to become EASL members and attend the meetings; I therefore encourage you to promote EASL memberships in your departments and units.

I want to thank the EASL premium sponsors BMS, Gilead, Roche, and Schering-Plough for their generous support that has allowed us to run various educational activities as well

as being active in Brussels to lobby for “the liver”. As lobbying in Europe has become a trend we asked Prof. Dominique Valla to become the official EASL EU Policy Councillor and to attend the GB meetings on a regular basis. I personally want to thank all GB members and the EASL Vice-Secretary Mark Thursz for their commitment to EASL, for their time (which they do not spend with their families...) and for their friendship. If we continue working together in this way I have no doubt that EASL will become even stronger and that it will continue being the leading society for scientists and physicians working in the field of liver disease.

EASL will face serious challenges in the upcoming years. Regulations for sponsorship are becoming increasingly tight, and we have to develop alternative fundraising ideas to be able to maintain our activities. EASL also has to re-define its role in the competing medical environment. Do we need other independent societies in special areas in our field and how could EASL fulfil the needs and requirements of all subspecialties? How do we define our relationships with other continental societies? What should be the role of EASL within UEGF – a federation of different societies that initially was supposed to organize the European liver week rather than to act as an additional independent society? Is the frequency and format of our ongoing activities still timely in the second decade of this century? The EASL Governing Board will address all these issues step by step. The society has changed in recent years – we have many more attendees at our meetings, we have a new office, and we have a new Governing Board structure. During this time of consolidation, the Governing Board most certainly welcomes all members for their support and advice. We all can only benefit from a strong European Association for the Study of Liver – speaking with one voice to all national and international stakeholders.

I hope to see you all in Vienna in April. The enthusiasm of our members and the willingness to share the best and latest research results during our International Liver Congress™ meeting is the basis for the success of EASL!